

THE IDEA OF GOD IN JAINISM

The Jaina idea of God is that of a Perfect Spirit. Spirit is a substance, according to the Jaina philosophy, having many points in common with matter, which is another substance in existence, and differing in many points from it. Consciousness appertains to Spirit, not to matter, though in the condition of impurity, all Spirits (souls) are found associated with material organisms. Spirit is a simple substance and not a compound, and for that reason is immortal, while all things which are composite and compounded are perishable. On attaining complete freedom from matter, Spirit becomes immortal.

A full, perfectly pure Spirit is omniscient, eternal, blissful, and also endowed with infinite energy. These attributes are not acquisitions from outside, nor ornaments put on for a time, but are the qualities of the Spirit substance. The true God should, therefore, be immortal in His own right, all-knowing, immeasurably happy and incapable of being swayed by any outside circumstance or force.

Divinity is free from sleep, stupor, drowsiness, laziness, boredom, affliction, pain or suffering of any kind whatsoever. A God should enjoy uninterrupted, unbroken illumination of full knowledge, and exhilaration of unsurpassed bliss at all times. He should have no duties or obligations to perform; He should be above undertakings; He should have no desire to be worshipped or to have His hymns chanted or His praises sung by men. He would not interfere in the affairs of men or inflict upon Himself the management of worlds, and He would not waste His time in creative activity in any form. A God should

have no unfulfilled purpose, no unsatisfied cravings or ambitions; and, for this reason, He would not manage or create a world. Divinity in the Jaina view should ever be tranquil, unagitated, restful and dependent only on Himself. Passions like anger and greed do not move a God; He is not subject to grief and sorrow.

The Jaina conception of God does not admit of an offering. Divinity in Jainism is compatible only with *ahimsa* (Universal Love) ; and will not, in any way, become associated with, or a party to, the shedding of the blood of the least or the lowest of living beings in ritualistic ceremonies.

A God should have no private loves or hatreds to sway or disturb or upset His inner tranquillity and repose; He is impervious alike to praise and abuse. Divinity is free from hunger, thirst, afflicting sensations, such as heat and cold, from which the spirits (souls) in physical bodies suffer. Sex function has no place in the life of a God; Spirit is neither male nor female, though unemancipated spirits appear with sex distinction, owing to the association with the physical body, which is characterised by the generative function. All impure spirits may attain to a Divine Status, as many have done in the past, and many will do in the future. All Spirits are alike in respect of their natural attributes and qualities, so that when they are purified, no difference remains to distinguish one of them from the others. All are alike, of the same substance, and endowed with like attributes; none amongst the Gods is greater, none less or lesser than any other. Apart from pure, perfect Spirit there are and can be no other gods. The Deity, in the Jaina doctrine, is the highest Ideal that is kept before the mind, with

the object of ultimately becoming like Him. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

If any one thinks that there is not enough work for Divinity to do in the above, or be dissatisfied with the description for any other cause, the reply is that Nature offers immortality only on these terms. None who rejects them can escape death and repeated deaths and perpetual misery in transmigration.

The idea of infinite power with reference to a Perfect Soul can be easily grasped if we ponder on the nature of Life of which He is the fullest expression. Let the mind dwell on the idea of continuity, and then associate it with Life, that is, continuity of living, without a break and without a pause. Life just perpetually goes on living. Death is unknown to Life, in reality. Indeed, how can it be otherwise when Life does not, cannot, halt even for a moment in its continuous living. Death only affects the intellectual function and the degree of consciousness or conscious intensity. But Life simply goes on living, continuously, ceaselessly, without a gap, without a stop. This, in itself, is inexhaustible, that is, infinite power.

The Perfect Soul, apart from this, is the destroyer of the greatest and the most powerful foe of living beings, namely *Karma*, to which everyone else is subject. No calamity, no misfortune, can approach the Holy One; Time is powerless to mark the lines of age on His features; Death itself is scared of Him — is no more for Him!

The Deified Soul is the true Hero, the Conqueror; no one can dislodge Him from His Status and the Supreme Seat; none can harm Him in the least, in any way. Those who seek His protection become like Him. He shall continue to be for ever and

for ever, with all His Glory ever remaining undiminished, His Power as unwaning after a hundred million years as to-day. He is Life itself that is Divine, and that cannot be stopped in any way from living on, from continuing to live! What men learn by enormous labour, and even then most imperfectly, He perceives and knows at a glance. He sees and knows *all* every moment of Time, by His own immeasurable awesome Power. Because of all this He is rightly adjudged to be possessed of infinite inexhaustible Power.

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